

Dr Ajey Lele,
Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA)
New Delhi, India

Presentation to 4th Five-Year Review Conference (RC-4)
Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
The Hague, The Netherlands, November 23, 2018

Mr Chairman, Director-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a pleasure to speak on behalf of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) from New Delhi, India. IDSA continues to stand tall on its mission to promote national and international security through the generation and dissemination of knowledge on defence and security-related issues. Research at the Institute is driven by a comprehensive agenda which also includes issues related to the Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs). Through its various publications, IDSA provides impartial analyses and presents wide ranging policy recommendations.

Mr Chairman

The Institute conducts several national and international conferences every year. We have also been fortunate to host various eminent dignitaries at our Institute. The institute publishes a biannual journal called *The CBW Magazine* which exclusively addresses issues concerning chemical and biological weapons and is probably one of its kind available globally. Now, for more than ten years this journal is offering a forum for debate for C & B issues and various eminent scholars have contributed in this journal.

Mr Chairman,

I feel privileged to make a statement at the 23rd session on CSP. Recently, on 11 November, the Armistice Day was commemorated. 100 years have passed after the end of the First World War which incidentally is also known as the Chemists' War. We have come a long way in these 100 years. However, the threat from chemical weapons is far from over.

The recent resurgence in the use of chemical weapons as tools of war, has been a more challenging issue. The consistent usage of CW in Syria and the region has been one of the key debates among state parties. 7th April 2018 witnessed another massive chemical attack in the Douma province of Syria. However, the Fact-Finding

Mission (FFM) of the OPCW has not found conclusive evidence to this effect but, the process of investigation is still not complete. The jury is still out on the nature of the attack. OPCW inspectors' needs to be complimented for undertaking this site investigation under very hostile circumstances.

Another pertinent issue has been the elevating level of crimes in the cyber-space. The recently attempted cyber-attack on the OPCW Headquarters' network and information system, has been a wake-up call for member nations. It is high time that an example is set such that a fear of consequence is instilled among the member nations. It is pertinent to strengthen the resilience of the international institutions in the digital domain to restore faith in global organisations.

I would also like to draw attention on the work of an Indian scientist, who has researched, patented and published research which establishes that though Ricin is known to be dermally inactive to cause any toxicity, it does affect the growth of hair follicle by inducing dystrophy, suggesting its therapeutic potential in dermatology. Though Ricin is under early stages of clinical development as a pharmaceutical drug, a proof-of-concept of this technology is already in the market as clinically tested herbal cosmetic product with castor bean extract as the active ingredient. Additionally, scientists around the world have been exploring its use as an "immunotoxin"—a substance that can assist the immune system by killing only dangerous cells. More research on this subject could tell us about Ricin's effectiveness to treat patients suffering from colon-cancer, lymphoma and leukaemia. However, as Ricin is classified as a Schedule 1 substance in CWC as a 'placeholder' for protein toxins, the technological and commercial exploitation of this opportunity for peaceful therapeutic purposes is challenging. This issue needs a debate. Botulinum toxin is a torch bearer for de-glamorizing potential bio-crime agents into successful therapeutic agents with huge economic impact.

Mr Chairman

The last one year has been a busy year for OPCW and various important events were organized. Efforts like conducting various workshops in addressing the challenges faced due to the non-state actors misusing chemicals and assisting countries in Formulating Plans to Implement the Chemical Weapons Convention are

praiseworthy. The CWC and OPCW have greatly contributed to norm building against chemical weapons and I am sure they would continue to do so.

However, there are several key issues that will need to be discussed, and strategies for arms control and chemical weapons destruction that need to be evaluated and reassessed during the Fourth Review Conference. The war in Syria is just one way in which the modern chemical threat has reinvented itself, and today more than ever, nation states need to be aware of the dangers of negligence. Moreover, achieving total demilitarization has proved difficult in the past, and remains a challenge. Without collaborative efforts, these challenges cannot be mitigated, as States would need to put aside their suspicions for the sake of countering such emergent threats together. Dealing with challenges like cyber-attacks on international organizations would require a firm reassessment of the current mandate, and a dedicated action plan for the future. I hope the OPCW is able to redefine its purpose owing to changing geopolitical realities.

Thank you.